

VZCZCXRO2712
OO RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEH KI #0497/01 1461248
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 261248Z MAY 09
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9637
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [KPKO](#) [KTIP](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC NOTES - MAY 26

¶1. (U) The information contained in this report consists principally of spot reports from various sources. This cable is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained herein be confirmed at this time.

Anti-LRA Operations

¶2. (SBU) The UPDF recently clashed with the LRA northeast of Tadu in the far east of Haut Uele District, resulting in five LRA dead. The FARDC reportedly clashed with the LRA near Faradje on May 19, but there are no reports of casualties. Also, on the night of 23 May, the LRA attacked the village of Bamukandi, four kilometers north of Dungu. According to Radio Okapi, the LRA burned 20 houses, killed two civilians, and kidnapped a number of civilians.

Security Situation in the Kivus

¶3. (SBU) An OCHA contact reported that 600-800 Pareco troops have expressed a desire to integrate into the FARDC in Oninga, a remote village far to the west of Lubero in North Kivu. A MONUC source who recently travelled to the area reported there are many FDLR around Oninga who want to repatriate, but only after negotiations with the GoR (Note: This is a common demand and is unlikely to be met. End note).

¶4. (SBU) In North Kivu, the FDLR attacked police in Kihito and Kiwanja (near Nyamilima) on May 20, again raising fears that the FDLR is targeting police officers who may be interfering with lucrative FDLR trade in the region. MONUC reported that three persons died in the attack, but it is not clear if they were police or civilians. The PNC is reportedly considering consolidating its smaller posts in the area or collocating with the FARDC to improve security.

¶5. (SBU) The FDLR also ambushed the FARDC near Pinga in two separate incidents on May 22, resulting in three FARDC dead. MONUC sources believe that the attacks were designed to deter trade on the newly re-opened axis, as well as to discredit the FARDC's ability to provide security in the area. In addition, MONUC reports that near Hombo, the FDLR has recently pressed some 100 boys into service as porters.

¶6. (SBU) The FDLR also staged an ambush in Kihuzi-Biega Park in South Kivu on May 22, killing three FARDC and 7 civilians. MONUC troops responded to a FARDC appeal for reinforcements, and reportedly exchanged fire with the FDLR, possibly resulting in FDLR casualties. According to Radio Okapi, the FDLR also attacked FARDC positions near the South Kivu villages of Kabona and Luhago on May 24. FDLR troops killed two FARDC lieutenants in Luhago and pillaged and burned the FARDC camp in Kabona.

¶7. (SBU) A diplomatic source who recently visited Walikale reported seeing dozens of Rwandan troops in the town. He believes their nationality is evident because they do not speak French or Swahili, seem to have little knowledge of local geography, avoid contact with

foreigners, and exhibit greater discipline than FARDC troops. Many residents of Walikale are also convinced the troops are Rwandan (Note and comment: The GoR stated it would leave some intelligence and liaison officers in the DRC following joint operations in February, so the presence of some Rwandans is not surprising. However, it is often difficult to determine if reports of "Rwandans" are either ex-CNDP, Congolese who grew up in Rwanda, or Hutu/Tutsi from the Rwandophone communities around Masisi. End note and comment).

¶8. (SBU) The FARDC-MONUC Joint Operations Center held its first formal meeting on May 21. MONUC contacts hope it will improve MONUC's very limited information about operations against the LRA.

IDPs

¶9. (SBU) Unconfirmed reports claim nearly 7,000 IDPs have recently arrived in Walikale from the Hombo-Bunyakiri region (Note: A diplomatic source who visited Walikale last week estimated that there are now 30,000 IDPs near Walikale, based on his interviews with IDPs and local NGOs. End note).

¶10. (U) Radio Okapi reported that there are 10,000 new IDPs in the Shabunda Territory of South Kivu. The vast majority of the new IDPs are fleeing the May 13 FDLR attacks on Luyuyu and Gigulube villages.

Assistance for the FARDC

¶11. (SBU) Salaries for the FARDC have reportedly arrived in Goma, and distribution may have already begun. Many troops have not been

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paid for three months, and it is not clear whether their back pay is also available. Tracking pay for FARDC units is confusing at best, as some soldiers have reportedly received pay for previous months, while others have not. EUSEC, which has been facilitating and tracking pay for at least four FARDC brigades since 2005, has had its mandate renewed for another three months, through September 2009 (Comment: Pay for the troops is especially critical on the eve of Operation Kimia II. Observers hope it will not only induce the FARDC to fight, but also improve discipline and curtail human rights abuses against civilians. End comment).

¶12. (SBU) The new head of MONUC Forward Headquarters, Colonel Guy Deacon, is trying to ramp up the "on-the-spot training" of the FARDC. He told us that current efforts by local MONUC commanders to mentor the FARDC were too ad hoc, and too focused on the activities that were easiest for MONUC rather than those most useful to the FARDC.

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